

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Working Group
for
Executive Committee for Highway Safety
Meeting Minutes; Mtg. #7
August 9, 2007**

Location:

NCDOT Large Conference Room, Room 280, 401 Oberlin Road @ 9:00 a.m.

Working Group Members in Attendance:

Loretta Barren	Cliff Braam	Greg Brew	Jeff Cox
James Dunlop	Vickie Embry	Jason Galloway	Greg Loy
Mary Meletiou	Tyler Meyer	Leza Mundt	Tom Norman
Pete Schubert	Charlie Zegeer		

Guests in Attendance:

Lanier McRee	Lori Schneider
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Working Group Members Absent:

Timothy Akers	Frank Hackney	Brad Hibbs	Daniel Keel
Margaret Landon	Jimmy Newkirk		

Scribe:

Jeff Cox

New Action Items:

- 1. Mary Meletiou to continue development for the Law Enforcement Education and ensure inclusion of a curriculum in the 2009 Mandated In-Service Training for Law Enforcement. This will include a presentation by her and Cliff Braam to the Joint In-Service Training Committee in October.**
- 2. Tom Norman will write a memo to Susan Coward requesting formation of a Task Force on Pedestrian Policy that will pursue policy revisions in NCDOT.**

Ongoing Subcommittees

- DMV Drivers Handbook subcommittee: Mary Meletiou (Chair), Tim Akers, Margaret Landon, Frank Hackney, and Pete Schubert.
- Law Enforcement Education subcommittee: Tim Akers (Chair), Mary Meletiou, Margaret Landon, Frank Hackney, and Pete Schubert.
- Subcommittee to propose strategy to Executive Committee to broaden Pedestrian Policy: Greg Brew (Chair), Vickie Embry, Daniel Keel, Mary Meletiou, Tom Norman, Charlie Zegeer.
- Subcommittee to develop plan on school site selection issues: Greg Loy (Chair), Jeff Cox, Mary Meletiou, Pete Schubert, and Sarah Worth. New Member: Leza Mundt (Safe Routes to Schools Coordinator)

Minutes:

- The meeting began at approximately 9:00 a.m.

Task I – Welcome

Tom Norman opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Task II – Introductions

Tom Norman introduced:

New group member Leza Mundt, State Safe Routes to School Coordinator.

Task III – Discussion of Changed Role of Working Groups --

Cliff Braam gave a brief overview of the changes that the Executive Committee for Highway Safety (ECHS) is making in order to make things run more smoothly.

- The ECHS is 4 years old.
- Working Groups (WGs) were very dependent on the ECHS.
- ECHS has voted to allow more independence for the WGs.
- ECHS to hold just three meetings a year in the months of February, May, and September.
- WGs may not make any proposals or moves involving the legislature without approval of the ECHS.
- The ECHS will rely on the WGs to make things happen:
 - In regard to funding, the WGs may pursue federal grants and grants through Institute for Transportation Engineers (ITE) and other partner agencies and private companies.
 - Public Education is very important to most WGs and can get assistance or funding for this through the Public Information Office Working Group.
 - WGs can still seek resolutions from the ECHS to support actions of the WGs.

Task IV – Discussion of Pedestrian Policy --

Greg Brew reported on the progress of the Pedestrian Policy Subcommittee.

The Pedestrian Policy Subcommittee began as a group to look at design guideline changes and morphed into a wholesale look at the Department's policy on pedestrians.

Tom Norman gave a rundown of the history of NCDOT's pedestrian policy.

- The Pedestrian Policy is more a funding guideline than it is a policy.
- There have been many developments that makes the existing policy no longer functional:
 - In 1993 – the Pedestrian Policy/Sidewalk Funding Guidelines were created. (Municipalities were dissatisfied with NCDOT policies at only replacing sidewalks where they currently exist.)
 - 1999 – USDOT Memo on Mainstreaming Bicycling and Walking
 - 2000 – NC General Assembly enacts Comprehensive Transportation Planning.

- 2000 – Board of Transportation Resolution in support of bicycling and walking.
- Currently – FHWA Pedestrian Safety Action Plans initiative (NC is one of 13 states with the highest level of pedestrian fatalities and injuries.)
- Rapid urbanization in areas of NC is transforming once rural areas into suburban environments.
- NC needs a more comprehensive pedestrian policy to guide.
- Increased health concerns such as obesity, heart disease, are directly related to physical inactivity. Having infrastructure that promotes bicycling and walking as alternative modes of transportation would increase physical activity and thereby, bring about a healthier community.
- It was suggested that Tom send a memo to Susan Coward, Chair of the ECHS.
- Jim Dunlop stated the sidewalks are becoming expected of NCDOT.
- Loretta Barren observed that the 17 MPOs in the state are required to look at all modes of transportation. They are increasingly frustrated that NCDOT is not addressing walking as a mode of transportation. Sidewalk construction is not currently a civil rights issue, but it is possible that it could through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). FHWA cannot mandate local law regarding this but are asking us to look at the need for sidewalks as transportation infrastructure.
- Vickie Embry has seen locations with disconnected sidewalks or no sidewalks where the demand was there. She has tried to find funds to connect sidewalks without any luck. She considers this to be a safety issue and is frustrated that Traffic Engineering will not assign Bicycle and Pedestrian safety concerns to her.
- Charlie Zegeer reminded us that FHWA is requiring a 10% reduction in pedestrian crashes. He also emphasized the obesity and health issues related to physical inactivity.
- Charlie also said that there are no national or local databases on the numbers of people who walk and bike.
- Pete Schubert, an EPA employee, emphasized that air quality is at issue. Promoting pedestrian travel is promoting air quality.
- Pete also said that Durham has adopted bicycle and pedestrian comprehensive plans. There are bond referendums on sidewalk and bikeway construction.
- Mary Meletiou suggested a policy to promote local government ability to do more in regard to pedestrian infrastructure.
- Tom brought up the proposed TIP Project U-3308 in Durham. It will widen Alston Avenue to a four-lane divided facility through a community in eastern Durham that is very dependent on pedestrian travel. This project raises many issues related to this discussion, in regard to designing a road or street that fits the community and enhances the community through good context sensitive design.
- Pete is particularly concerned about right turn yield situations like those proposed in the Alston Avenue project.
- Jim Dunlop, who is familiar with the project, said there are two major issues: 1. At the interchange with the freeway, the ramps at the freeway should be “free flow”. 2. There is a

need to add auxiliary right turn lanes to handle critical volumes of traffic. These auxiliary lanes will be at capacity.

- Charlie recommended that pork chop islands be considered and a reduction of free flow by increasing the angle of approach to the intersection.
- Pete also said that there are historic properties and that little consideration was given to the character of the neighborhood. Again he mentioned that air quality is at issue. There is also a planned transit station at Alston Avenue just north of the freeway. That will increase the number of pedestrians in the area.
- Pete suggested development of a formalized Pedestrian Level of Service (LOS) criteria and policy to address the tensions faced when considering the balance of Pedestrian LOS with the LOS of motor vehicular traffic.
- Tom added that it is important to make judgements for pedestrians versus motor vehicles.
- Greg Brew said that the Roadway Design Unit is has a very procedural culture. They like cookie-cutter design. He said that most design standards are based on safety and design of traffic flow. He said there is little “handy” design criteria/standards for pedestrians and bikes. Another project where the tensions between the pedestrians and high volumes of traffic is US 421 in Boone.
- Tom said that the solution would be difficult. Optimized vehicular traffic minimizes pedestrian and bike safety and vice versa. There is no win-win solution. Somebody loses no matter what is decided on projects like these. But one thing is resoundingly clear: the Pedestrian Funding Guidelines from 1993 do not provide adequate guidance for today.
- Tyler Meyer offered that the AASHTO guidelines are very helpful to resolve the tensions in these design issues.
- Lori Schneider gave a few points on Health issues.
 - The goal of her office is to increase the physical activity of North Carolinians.
 - Only 42% of NC citizens meet minimal activity recommendations.
 - They support environmental changes that promote or provide for increased physical activity.
 - Tom commented that we should include this goal in our list of reasons for pedestrian policy change.
 - Lori stressed that physical activity does not mean “exercise”.
- Tyler Meyer proposed that counting methods should change for a broader perspective of pedestrians when traffic counts are performed. Even with that, latent demand that will be observed with new pedestrian facilities should be considered. This latent demand will increase with a rise in quality of facilities and changes in land use will also affect pedestrian demand.
- The Working Group unanimously approved of writing a memo to Susan Coward recommending that a Task Force on Pedestrian Policy be formed to address policy reform. Memo should include all points on the second page of Greg Brew’s handout among the issues discussed at this meeting.

Task V – Discussion of Law Enforcement Education – Mary Meletiou

- Mary Meletiou distributed a handout on Law Enforcement Education.
- Pete Schubert said that all law enforcement officers should be encouraged to go through these training modules.
- Mary Meletiou explained that the Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP) has a point system in place that promotes continuing education for law enforcement officers across the state. Perhaps the GHSP could include the training on bicycle laws in this incentive program for Sheriffs' and Police Departments.
- The Joint In-Service Training Committee Meeting is in October. Mary has been offered ten minutes to request that modules on bicycle laws be included as required training. To show support for this, we will request that Secretary Tippet send an email to Peggy Shaeffer and to the chairs of the committee requesting inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian law training through the In-Service Program and the BLET. She also wants to request a resolution from the ECHS supporting training in both bicycle and pedestrian issues.
- Leza Mundt asked about distributing the existing pamphlet on Bicycle/Pedestrian laws.
- Someone suggested that Wisconsin also has something we can use.
- Cliff Braam suggested that we could get some training through Roll Call Training as a short term goal. Mid-term, our goal would be to pursue the In-Service Training. Long-term we would add the BLET.
- The Working Group was unanimous in its support of continuing to move forward.

Task VI – Discussion of Speeding in School Zones – Mary Meletiou

- Mary Meletiou requested to put this issue on hold until the next meeting.
- Greg Brew mentioned that Virginia has significantly increased fines and penalties for speeding in school zones.

Task VII – Discussion of New Issue of Rumble Strips – Tom Norman

- Tom Norman described rumble strips as a new way to help deter lane departure crashes. These rumble strips, which are located in paved shoulders just outside the white line that delineates the edge of the travel lane, are a deterrent to bicyclists if done improperly or extensively.
- Tom stressed that NC is considered the best bicycling experience in the southeast and on the east coast due to good signing.
- Tom now sees the new interest in rumblestrips from the Feds as being potentially in direct conflict with the 1999 mainstreaming memorandum from the Feds.
- Loretta did not feel comfortable to speak on this issue for FHWA.
- Tom said that many funds have been invested in wide paved shoulders for the bicycle accommodations. Now those investments are being targeted for rumblestrips.
- Vickie Embry said that she has not been considering bike routes when recommending rumblestrips. She did suggest that there may be some alternatives worth considering. One alternative would be to use narrower strips or to install the strips under the edge line.

- Jim Dunlop said that consideration should be given to the need of wider paved shoulders if rumblestrips are under consideration.
- Tom said that in certain parts of the state, there are limited routes to handle long distance cars and bicycles.
- Jim agrees we need to look at problems in a way that considers all modes of transportation.
- Mary Meletiou offered that there is a GIS layer of Bike Routes available. Perhaps rumblestrips could be used for shorter distances at spots where extra warning is needed.
- Pete Schubert asked what other states had done?
- Tom would like for this to be kept as an awareness issue. It is requested that the FHWA report on this at the next meeting.
- Vickie Embry suggested that DBPT could present on this issue at the Roundtable of Traffic Engineers once federal input is obtained.
- Cliff Braam said that he would make sure that other Working Groups are aware of this issue through the website and the quarterly publication. The Lane Departure WG is particularly important. Charlie Zegeer is also on that WG, which is chaired by Steve Varnedoe.
- Tom explained the situation on River Road in the Wilmington area. River Road is a popular route for local and long distance bicyclists. It is also signed as the “Ports of Call” Bicycling Highway. Lane departures were an issue here and rumble strips were proposed for most of the length of River Road. We brought our concerns to the Regional and Division Traffic Engineers and suggested the use of short sections of the rumblestrips in “hot spots” of lane departure crashes. The traffic engineers have agreed and we are still gathering feedback from motorists and bicyclists. This may be a good example of working together.

Task VII – Status of Ongoing Action Items

Driver’s Handbook Revisions

- There was some discussion about how to handle public feedback, particularly from groups such as bicycle advocacy groups who request to have input. IT was decided that issues with verbage in the handbook should be referred to DMV.

School Site Selection

- Greg Loy said this is going to be a much slower process than other groups. There is still much need for education on our part. Also a need to look for other resources and partners. Sarah O’Brien may have started a draft resolution that may provide a base for us as we consider where to go from here.
- Leza Mundt said that minimum acreage standards are now repealed in North Carolina, but that the state still holds to them as guidelines.
- Vickie Embry said that the issue comes down to a decision about money for most school districts. Counties frequently ignore the recommendations from NCDOT.
- Tom Norman suggested we look up and learn about various case studies.
- Tyler Meyer encouraged sitting down with school administrators.

- Leza offered that research shows that children perform better academically in smaller schools.

Task– Next Meeting Date

Our next meeting will be in the Large Conference Room at 401 Oberlin Road at 9:00 on Thursday, November 8th.

The meeting was adjourned at noonish.